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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 000617

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR, IO/PSC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [HA](#)

SUBJECT: Haiti Response to UN Efforts to Combat Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping Missions

PORAU PR 00000617 001.2 OF 002

**¶1.** (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified -- please protect accordingly.

**¶2.** (SBU) Summary. This message is Embassy's assessment of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) by members of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) requested by reftel. Embassy assesses that sexual exploitation by UN peacekeepers in Haiti is a residual, diminishing problem. The most common form is MINUSTAH personnel exchanging money and/or food for sexual favors. Haitian women prostitutes - some of them underage - are the victims of this sexual exploitation. Credible NGO sources have reported several accounts of sexual exploitation by MINUSTAH personnel. However, human rights representatives and NGOs agree that SEA acts have decreased since late 2007 after the sexual misconduct by Sri Lankan peacekeepers was publicly revealed in November 2007, who were later repatriated. End summary.

MINUSTAH EFFORTS TO PREVENT SEA

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**¶3.** (SBU) MINUSTAH officials report that the Conduct and Discipline Office is responsible for (1) prevention of misconduct, (2) reception of complaints of misconduct, and (3) advising the UN Secretary General and the MINUSTAH Force Commander when a case of misconduct occurs. MINUSTAH policy on sexual contact first reported reftel is still in effect: military peacekeepers are forbidden any sexual contact with Haitians. UN police and civilian personnel are forbidden any transactional sex with Haitians, and are ''strongly discouraged'' from any consensual sex with Haitians. Officials state that prevention is the primary function of the office, and that they enforce the UN's ''zero-tolerance'' policy on sexual offenses by peacekeeping personnel.

**¶4.** (SBU) All MINUSTAH off-duty staff -- including military officers, civilians and police -- is required to obey MINUSTAH-imposed curfew hours of midnight to 0500 on weekdays and 0100 to 0500 on weekends. UN vehicles are also required to be off the streets during these times if not on specific duty. The curfew is intended to reduce the potential for drunkenness, fighting, and soliciting prostitutes by UN personnel. MINUSTAH has designated specific neighborhoods, nightclubs and bars as off-limits to MINUSTAH personnel for the same reasons.

**¶5.** (SBU) MINUSTAH officials report that the Unit has received a few reports of SEA since the Sri Lanka scandal in 2007. The most recent biannual UN Security Council Report of the Secretary-General on MINUSTAH, released in March 2009, stated that six Formed Police Unit officers were repatriated for SEA between August 2008 and February 2009. MINUSTAH's Conflict and Discipline Unit trains all staff on

strategies to prevent SEA. The Unit provides one- to two-hour in-country training workshops for newly-arrived contingents prior to their deployment within Haiti. MINUSTAH also provides two additional training sessions before expiration of their six-month tours. MINUSTAH trained 2,620 staff from August 2008 to February 2009 on SEA issues and held training workshops for Conduct and Discipline Unit international and local staff assigned to some 35 MINUSTAH field offices in Haiti. MINUSTAH launched an internal campaign against transactional sex including a film festival. The Secretary-General's March 2009 report also stated that communication of the UN's policy against sexual exploitation and abuse was further supported through field visits and outreach using MINUSTAH's multimedia centers.

**¶6.** (SBU) In the event a complaint is filed, the Conduct and Discipline Unit assesses the complaint's legitimacy and type (SEA, criminal, administrative, etc) prior to making a recommendation to the UNSRSG. Based on the UNSRSG's recommendation, UN Headquarters makes a final decision on disciplinary action and/or next steps. MINUSTAH's Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) continues to provide the UNSRSG monthly reports on its investigation of all incidents. (Note: A Conduct and Discipline focal unit exists in each MINUSTAH satellite office throughout Haiti and is staffed by both a local and expatriate staff member. Each complaint is registered in an electronic database for immediate access by UN headquarters in New York. End note.)

#### GOVERNMENT OUTLOOK ON MINUSTAH PREVENTION OF SEA

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**¶7.** (SBU) Government of Haiti representatives maintain a dim view of the conduct of MINUSTAH personnel toward Haitians, although they are able to provide little evidence of such. Director of Protection in the Office of Citizen Protection Necker DeSaables (the equivalent of

POR AU PR 00000617 002.2 OF 002

a national ombudsman) believed MINUSTAH personnel, especially soldiers, take advantage of women and young girls, but she was unable to cite specific cases, and said she finds it difficult to find victims willing to testify. Director of Haitian National Police Child Protection Brigade (BPM) Renel Costume highlighted MINUSTAH's improved conduct since exposure of the Sri Lanka case (Note: Embassy has seen no reports of SEA by MINUSTAH personnel in Haitian press this year. End Note.) He affirmed that the BPM has a positive working relationship with UNPOL. Costume stated that in the course of 2008, his office received only one complaint of SEA from a teenage girl accusing a Pakistani MINUSTAH soldier. (Note: BPM received numerous complaints alleging acts of SEA by Haitians and civilian expatriates. End note) The BPM filed a grievance with MINUSTAH, but Costume said he was unaware of any action taken by the UN to address the complaint. The victim was referred to Haiti's Institute of Social Welfare (IBESR) for support and other services.

#### NGO PERSPECTIVE OF MINUSTAH PREVENTION OF SEA

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**¶8.** (SBU) Haitian NGOs Embassy has consulted have an even more critical view of MINUSTAH's efforts to enforce discipline - but also are unable to point to specific cases. NGOs are skeptical about MINUSTAH's efforts to prevent SEA. Pan American Development Foundation (PADF) Director of Programs Herve Razaphimbahiny and National Defense Network for Human Rights (RNDDH) Executive Director Pierre Esperance indicate that very little is known about MINUSTAH's efforts to prevent SEA, or about its procedures for prosecuting SEA violators. Razaphimbahiny characterized MINUSTAH acts of SEA as "'disturbing'" and stated that one area where SEA cases are reported is the Port au Prince slum of Cite Soleil, where most cases involve MINUSTAH soldiers engaging in sexual acts with underage prostitutes.

He claimed that MINUSTAH personnel acts of SEA also occur in the Port-au-Prince neighborhoods of Champs de Mars (near the National Palace), Petion-Ville and near the international airport. He also explained that a Ministry of Social Affairs representative within the past year wrote a letter to MINUSTAH explaining several cases of SEA that required action but was unaware whether MINUSTAH had responded. He claimed that MINUSTAH's perceived lack of sanctions

gave their personnel a sense of impunity.

¶ 19. (SBU) Esperance echoed Razaphimbahiny's perception of deficient MINUSTAH communication with its personnel and the Haitian public and emphasized that ''victims do not know what to do [when involved in SEA cases].'' He thought that UN Police (UNPOL) exhibit more professionalism than military personnel. He complained that MINUSTAH has offices that address human rights and justice, but argued that the human rights office should serve as the umbrella office to streamline the management of SEA complaints. Esperance noted that there were many SEA cases involving MINUSTAH personnel during 2005-2007 but believed there are fewer cases since the case of the Sri Lanka contingent in 2007. Victims (Esperance could not provide an approximate number) seek the services and support of RNDDH for advocacy. RNDDH, in turn, files a complaint on behalf of victims with MINUSTAH's human rights section. Esperance stated that RNDDH follows up on cases but receives limited feedback from MINUSTAH, as the ultimate determination of disciplinary action rests with UN Headquarters in New York.

INTERVIEW CONTACTS

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¶ 10. (SBU) Government of Haiti: Renel Costume, Director of Haitian National Police Child Protection Brigade (BPM); Necker DeSaables, Director of Protection, Office of Citizen Protection.

¶ 11. (SBU) Non-Governmental Organizations: Herve Razaphimbahiny, Pan-American Development Foundation Programs Director; Pierre Esperance, Executive Director of local human rights organization National Defense Network of Human Rights (RNDDH).

¶ 12. (SBU) Other: Joel Lorquet, Senior Information Assistant, US Embassy Port-au-Prince.

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